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Owning the Places

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Owning the Places

Tonight, as I climb into bed, I see my legs,
winter white, but okay for 40 year old legs.
They're holding up.

My arms can take plates from the shelf, and my hands, well,
they still do the job painlessly.
I think of Charlene at work, 33,

who died of a blood clot--complication from gastric bypass,
the sadness with her own body that drove her to lie down on that table
and be opened. And I think of my poet friend,

the one who is skin and bone on purpose only fighting it
and of the time she said *I wish women could write poetry
that celebrates their bodies*. I think, now that my husbands are gone,

now that there is no one to look but me, now that I take
myself to bed every night, lie down with myself
and greet myself every morning, I can look and say--

men have loved these breasts, these lips,
the soft skin of my wrist, and more men will come,
but right now, I'm happy to take this body out on the town,

buy it dinner, maybe dance with it a bit,
and I'm just as happy to slip these two white legs into bed alone
and touch them where they meet.

Marissa McNamara is an English teacher at a two-year college in Atlanta, Georgia. She has been writing for 13 years. She credits her development of voice to Women Writing for a Change, a writing center in Cincinnati, Ohio, that focuses on the conscious feminine. Marissa work appears in publications such as *RATTLE*, *StorySouth*, and *Future Cycle*.